

# Crisis Response Protocol for Suicide Ideation and Attempts Molloy University

For faculty and staff of Molloy University

Developed with support from the Garrett Lee Smith Campus  
Suicide Prevention Grant #1U79SM062510-01

*These guidelines are intended to assist faculty, professional staff, administrators and other Molloy University employees with addressing student related crises. While some campus officials play more active roles in responding to student crises, it is important for all University faculty and professionals to have a working knowledge of these guidelines. Although Molloy University strives to respond in a consistent manner, the specific facts and circumstances of any crisis may lead the University to adjust the actions suggested in these guidelines.*

## *Acknowledgements:*

*Appalachian State University*

*Ohlone University*

*Postvention: A Guide for Response to Suicide on University Campuses*

*University at Albany, State University of New York*

## **Introduction**

According to the National Mental Health Association, it is estimated that over 1,000 University students die from suicide each year. One in every 12 U.S. University students makes a suicide plan, according to National Data on Campus Suicide and Depression. Unfortunately, no University or university is immune to these tragic events. This guide is a comprehensive effort to address the problem of suicide among university students.

If you are confronted with a student contemplating or threatening suicide, be assured that there are knowledgeable and well-trained Molloy University staff members ready to assist the at-risk student and you.

Here is how to respond:

**Call for assistance by following the Crisis Response Protocol for Suicide Ideation and Attempts on the following pages.**

## **Purpose**

When a student in the Molloy University community is facing a crisis, the entire University can be affected. Therefore, it is critical that a basic framework exist to enhance coordinated efforts that protect the safety and well-being of the student in crisis and each member of the campus community. These procedures can be your guide when students are in crisis, or when students display behavior that could indicate they are experiencing emotional or psychological distress. This guide will help create a safe space where members of the Molloy University community feel supported, and promote mental health as a key element in the academic success of the University's students.

Please keep in mind that the strategies listed in this document are not all-inclusive. As additional needs for specific intervention strategies arise, Molloy University will work towards making these additions or modifications.

## **Risk Factors and Warning Signs**

Disregarding early warning signs facilitates escalation. Detecting early signs of a crisis can prevent potential harm to self or others by getting students the help they need quickly.

Below are examples of risk factors and warning signs which need attention and a response.

### **Risk Factors**

*Risk factors are characteristics that make it more likely that an individual will consider, attempt, or die by suicide. Someone who has these characteristics may not be actively suicidal, attempt suicide or die by suicide, but they are at higher risk for dying by suicide than someone who does not possess these characteristics.*

Mental disorders	Bullying	Easy access to lethal means
Substance abuse disorders	Self-harm	Lack of social support
Hopelessness	Previous suicide attempt	Stigma associated with seeking help
Impulsive tendencies	Family history of suicide	Barriers to accessing mental health care
Aggressive tendencies	Job or financial loss	Knowing someone who has died by suicide
History of trauma or abuse	Relational or social loss	

### **Warning Signs**

*Warning signs are behaviors that signal, "I'm in trouble." Keep in mind that the presence of warning signs does not constitute a definitive diagnosis of suicide, but these are red flags and show that the student is struggling and does need help. **Warning signs should never be ignored.** If a student is acting in a way that is not how they normally act, you should check in on them. If you notice any of these warning signs, take action: talk to the student, consult with the Student Personal Counseling Center, or contact Public Safety. More details regarding how to approach the student are included on the following pages.*

Making a plan on how to kill oneself	Talking about wanting to die or kill oneself
Giving away treasured belongings	Sleeping or eating too much or too little
Feeling hopeless "nothing is going to change"	Withdrawing/isolating from friends and activities
Feeling trapped "there isn't anything I can do"	Losing interest in personal appearance (e.g. change in hygiene)
Feeling like a burden "people are better off without me"	Showing extreme changes in behavior or personality
Obsessing about death	Taking unnecessary risks/reckless behavior
Agitated/aggressive behavior	Drastic change in grades- failing grades
Writing poems, essays or drawings that refer to death	Mood swings
Communication about suffering/death via social media	



## Emergency Contact Resources

### IS SOMEONE IN IMMINENT DANGER?

**Imminent Danger: Risk of death is high. They have a suicide plan and access to lethal means, are planning to make a suicide attempt very soon, or are currently in the process of making an attempt.**

**YES**



**Call IMMEDIATELY:**

**On RVC Main Campus:  
Public Safety  
516-323-3500**

**All other Molloy University off-site locations:  
9-1-1**

**UNCERTAIN**



**Call:**

**On RVC Main Campus:  
Public Safety  
516-323-3500**

**All other Molloy University off-site locations:  
9-1-1**

**NO**



**Call the Student Personal Counseling Center:  
516-323-3484**

**For assistance after hours, or when counseling center staff is not available, call Public Safety at 516-323-3500 and they will connect you with a trained Administrator on-call.**

*\*The Student Personal Counseling Center is in operation only when class is in session. For example, the Student Personal Counseling Center is not in operation during Christmas Break. For assistance when class is not in session, call Public Safety (516-323-3500). Public Safety is available 24/7, even when classes are not in session. In addition, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK [8255] is available 24/7 to facilitate connection to local mental health services.*

## **How to Respond to an At-Risk Student**

*Take every complaint or reference to suicide very, very seriously.*

### **Judgment**

Any faculty member or employee involved in a crisis at Molloy University must use his/her own best judgment regarding how to respond.

Everyone needs to know:

- 1) Which issues require immediate action?
- 2) What should be done for the student in crisis?
- 3) Who else may be affected, and what support is available for them?
- 4) Who should be notified?

**Training is available.**  
Contact Talita Ferrara at [tferrara@molloy.edu](mailto:tferrara@molloy.edu) if you are interested in receiving additional training on suicide prevention.

These questions must be answered quickly in an emergency. Guidance on answering many of these questions is presented on the following pages. **When in doubt, consult with the Student Personal Counseling Center (516) 323-3484. If a counselor is not available, contact Public Safety (516) 323-3500 and they will connect with you to a trained Administrator on-call.**

**Approach** the student. **Acknowledge** their pain. Be specific about the things you have noticed that have led you to start this conversation. Focus on describing the student's behavior. For instance, "I have noticed that you have been sleeping in class for the past two weeks." Make sure to have this conversation in a private place and give yourself plenty of time to talk to the at-risk student.

**Probe.** Ask questions about what is going on in the student's life. If you think suicide is on the student's mind, the best way to help the student is by asking them directly about suicide. Ask "Are you thinking about suicide?" or "Have you thought about killing yourself?" Make sure you ask about suicide. If you ask someone who is suicidal if they are thinking about "hurting" themselves, they may say no. "Hurting yourself" and "killing yourself" are two very different things. If the student is thinking about suicide, ask questions that will get you the following information:

- Is there a suicide plan? • Is there a means to carry out the plan? • Is there a time frame? •

**If the student has a plan and access to the lethal means to carry out his/her plan, is planning to make an attempt very soon, or is currently in the process of making an attempt, this student is in imminent danger. Do not leave the student alone. Get the student help immediately by calling Public Safety at (516) 323-3500 if on RVC Main Campus. For all other Molloy University off-site locations, call 9-1-1.**

**If a student is expressing current thoughts of suicide but is NOT in imminent danger, do not leave the student alone. Contact the Student Personal Counseling Center (516) 323-3484 for a consultation. If a counselor is not available, contact Public Safety (516) 323-3500 and they will connect you with a trained Administrator on-call. Please note, in the event**

**that a student expressing current thoughts of suicide abruptly exits the room prior to consultation with the Student Personal Counseling Center, call Public Safety immediately at (516) 323-3500 to insure the student's safety.**

**Promote Hope** by listening to the student. Try not to interrupt them and be willing to sit with them as they talk about the reasons why they want to die. Let them get all those reasons out, and then listen as they come up with their own reasons to live. Do not tell the student what you think their reasons for living should be, as what you think are reasons to live may be stressors to the student. While listening, do not rush to judgment. Let them know they are not alone and that help is available.

**Share Referrals.** Have your resources on hand. While arranging for help, stay with the student. Do not leave them alone. Form a safety net. Ask the student if there is anyone else they feel comfortable talking to about this (parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, grandparents, cousins, friends, priests, professors, mentors or coaches). For a list of available resources, refer the student to Appendix A.

**If the student has a weapon, remove yourself from the area and call Public Safety immediately at (516) 323-3500 if on RVC Main Campus. Public Safety will then contact 9-1-1 regarding the situation. For all other Molloy University off-site locations, call 9-1-1.**

Recognize the limits of your expertise and responsibility. Help is available from one of the professional counselors in the Student Personal Counseling Center (516) 323-3484. If a counselor is not available, please contact Public Safety at (516) 323-3500 and they will connect you with a trained Administrator on-call.

**\*The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK [8255] is available 24/7 to facilitate connection to local mental health services.  
Public Safety (516-323-3500) is available 24/7, even when classes are not in session.\***

## **How to Respond to Suicidal Ideation or Gestures**

Suicidal ideation, or suicidal thinking, is a common medical term that refers to either passive or active thoughts about suicide. Passive suicidal ideation involves a desire to die, but without a specific plan for carrying out one's death. Active suicidal thoughts involve a current wish to die accompanied by a suicide plan and accessible means to carry out the plan. Active suicidal ideation is a medical emergency. **If you know a student is experiencing active suicidal ideation, call Public Safety at (516) 323-3500 immediately if on RVC Main Campus. For all other Molloy University off-site locations, call 9-1-1.**

If a Molloy University employee is concerned about someone being a threat to themselves, they should follow the guidelines below. If you do not have the training or knowledge to conduct a suicide risk assessment and determine the safety of a student, consult the Student Personal Counseling Center at (516) 323-3484. If a counselor is not available, call Public Safety at (516) 323-3500 and they will connect you with a trained Administrator on-call for assistance.

### **Guidelines**

- 1) Ask the following questions in order to gain a more full understanding of the scope of imminent danger:
  - a) Does the student want to attempt suicide?
  - b) Does the student have a plan to attempt suicide?
  - c) Does the student have the means to carry out that plan?
  - d) Has the student ever attempted suicide in the past?
  - e) If so, what methods of attempt have been used in the past?

The answers to these questions will help drive the next steps. The answers to these questions will also help inform the Student Personal Counseling Center or another mental health professional of the depth of the situation. **If the student has a plan and access to a lethal means, is planning to make an attempt very soon, or is currently in the process of making an attempt, this student is in imminent danger and should not be left alone. Get the student help immediately by calling Public Safety at (516) 323-3500 if on RVC Main Campus. For all other Molloy University off-site locations, call 9-1-1.**

- 2) If the student is not in imminent danger, ask the student if they would like to speak to a counselor, and if they agree, contact the **Student Personal Counseling Center at (516) 323-3484**. During regular office hours, the student can be walked over to the Student Personal Counseling Center, but it is recommended that you call first, if possible.

If it is after hours, weekends, or you are not able to contact a counselor at the Student Personal Counseling Center, contact Public Safety at (516) 323-3500 and they will connect you with a trained Administrator on-call.

If the student does not want to speak to anyone else, call the **Student Personal Counseling Center at (516) 323-3484** to consult about next steps. Convey to the student that their safety is of the utmost importance, and you want to make sure you are providing all the assistance you can, which includes reaching out for help. Follow the recommendation of the **Student Personal Counseling Center**.

- 3) If the student is taken to the hospital, notify the **Student Affairs Office (516) 323-3456** so that a follow up visit can occur at the hospital. If after hours, call **Public Safety (516) 323-3500** and request to speak to the **Administrator on-call**.
  - a) The VPSA/Dean of Students will provide additional information to key individuals as necessary.
- 4) While arranging for help, do not leave the student alone. Stay with the student until help arrives.
- 5) In all circumstances of clear and imminent danger, **call Public Safety for an immediate response**. If on RVC main campus, call **Public Safety at (516) 323-3500**. All other Molloy University off-site locations, **call 9-1-1**.
- 6) Always remember that, when in doubt, consult with the Student Personal Counseling Center at (516) 323-3484. If a counselor is not available, call Public Safety at (516) 323-3500 and they will connect you with a trained Administrator on-call.



## How Molloy Will Respond to Suicide Attempts

The stress of the University experience and the normal developmental issues of young adulthood place some students under emotional pressure that occasionally manifests in an attempt by the student to take his or her own life. It is the philosophy and practice of Molloy University to assist students with the stress and developmental issues of University and to render assistance to students by helping them resolve these issues.

Molloy University is also aware that, when a student attempts suicide, other people in the University community are affected by this act. Molloy University has an interest in supporting everyone in the community with the emotional stress and crisis atmosphere that accompanies attempted suicides.

### Guidelines

- 1) Upon learning that a student is attempting suicide on RVC main campus, **Public Safety must be notified immediately at (516) 323-3500** (issues of confidentiality do not apply when a person's life is in danger). For suicide attempts that occur on all other Molloy University off-site locations, **call 9-1-1**. In many instances, a suicide attempt constitutes a medical emergency (e.g. bleeding from self-injury, confusion, or coma from drug overdose).

**The following designated personnel will take the next steps:**

- 2) **Public Safety** will notify:
  - a) **Medical emergency personnel** as needed
  - b) **The Director or Assistant Director of Public Safety**
  - c) **Local Police**
  - d) **The Student Personal Counseling Center**
  - e) **The Student Affairs Office**
  - f) **The Administrator on-call (after hours)**
- 3) **Medical emergency personnel** will transport the student to the hospital.
- 4) The **VPSA/Dean of Students or their designee** will go to the hospital and render assistance as needed. When appropriate, the Student Affairs office will contact the family of the student who attempted suicide and support will be given to family members and significant others at the hospital as needed. The VPSA/Dean of Students will coordinate their activities and involvement with the necessary Molloy University individuals. The VPSA/Dean of Students will notify the President's Office.
- 5) If the student is hospitalized, the **VPSA/Dean of Students or their designee** will do the following:
  - a) Gather as much information as possible, including the current condition of the student and the precipitating event that led to hospitalization; whether the student is in the hospital and what their room number is; whether anyone such as friends or family is

- currently with the student; whether family, friends, faculty or anyone else has been notified of the hospitalization; and how the student was transported to the hospital.
- b) Gather available information from available resources and online databases to get a full picture of student status.
  - c) Check student's Emergency Contact Information to make proper notifications.
  - d) If visiting the hospital, take business cards. Check in with the hospital's Crises Team before going to the room so that they will be aware you are there to see the student. If the student is able to converse, assess the student's needs, and offer to send out a faculty notification. If the parents are on their way, find out when they will arrive to meet them at the hospital, if necessary.
- 6) The **Student Affairs Office** will report all relevant information regarding the attempted suicide, including contacts with significant others, and case notes sharing as appropriate with Molloy University Residence Life and the Student Personal Counseling Center.
  - 7) If **Student Personal Counseling Center** deems it advisable to, on behalf of the student, communicate with the **Student Affairs Office**, the **Student Personal Counseling Center** will have the student sign a release of information and facilitate that communication.
  - 8) The **Associate Dean of Academic Services** is available to discuss academic options with students. If a student decides that it is in his/her best interest to leave school, the **Associate Dean of Academic Services** will assist with navigating the withdrawal process.

The procedure for students to re-enter classes and continue with coursework depends on many variables; including the point in the semester when the extended absence occurred, class attendance prior to hospitalization, and doctor's recommendations.

If a student is out of school for a minimum of three consecutive days, the student, parent or guardian should inform the University at either office:

- mflomenhaft@molloy.edu or (516) 323-3024 Office of Academic Affairs
- office-of-student-affairs@molloy.edu or (516) 323-3456 Student Affairs Office

Each instructor on the student's schedule will be notified of the absence and that the student has an excused absence from classes. Instructors will receive an email that states: "We have been informed that student (ID#000000) Jeffrey XXXXXXXX will not be in class for two weeks. He will be in touch with you in regard to any missed work." Depending on the course, instructors may have a limit of excused absences.

As soon as the student is able to communicate directly, he/she should contact the **Associate Dean of Academic Services** to make academic plans for completing the semester (mflomenhaft@molloy.edu or (516) 323-3024).

Students are not encouraged to disclose their medical conditions, nor do they have to when asked by instructors, administrators, or classmates. If the medical condition has an impact on class

participation, the student should go to Molloy's Disability Support Services (516) 323-3315, located in Casey Center Room 017, to explore necessary accommodations.

Depending on the circumstances, the student may be required to file forms in a timely fashion, such as withdrawal, permission to take an off-campus class, or register with Molloy's Disability Support Services for further accommodations.

Some academic options include postponing a final grade with an Incomplete, making up lost work with tutors or faculty, or request a medical withdrawal for the semester. Tuition refunds are not guaranteed. Students may apply for a tuition appeal depending on the circumstances. Tuition appeal forms are available at the Office of the Bursar (516) 323-4100, located in Wilbur Room 225.

9). If the student decides to remain at the University, the student will be encouraged to be engaged in psychotherapy. The **Student Personal Counseling Center** will work with other University departments to reintegrate the student into the campus environment and to develop appropriate support mechanisms with the student. Additional support is provided and discussed at the confidential Student of Concern meetings.

If appropriate, the **Dean of Students** or the **Vice President for Student Affairs** will contact the **Vice President of Academic Affairs, the Associate Dean of Academic Services, Disability Support Services, or other offices** as appropriate, so that further support can be provided.

### **Follow-Up**

**Any member of Molloy University involved in the intervention of the suicide attempt** may call the **Student Personal Counseling Center** to consult about how to best help the student following the attempt or for additional mental health consultation. If a Molloy University employee would like to receive assistance to cope with his/her own emotions, he/she should contact Carebridge, our Employee Assistance Program at 1-800-437-0911.

## **Confidentiality Concerns**

Molloy University staff members who respond to crises must remain aware that students have a right to privacy and that, in some instances, they may not wish to have information shared with others. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) protects the privacy of student education records. Once observations become written (electronically or on paper) they become FERPA Protected, unless these records are written by and remain in custody of the police.

As outlined in Molloy University's Policy Statement on FERPA staff may disclose FERPA information without consent when the disclosure is to Molloy University officials (e.g. a person employed by the University in an administrative, supervisory, academic, research or support staff position, including health and medical staff, and/or a person employed by Public Safety) who have a legitimate educational interest in the records. An official has a legitimate educational interest if that official is performing a task specific to their position description, performing a task related to the discipline or education of a student, providing a service or benefit to the student or student's family (e.g. healthcare, counseling, job placement, financial aid), or maintaining the safety and security of the campus.

In any situation, it is always best to attempt and obtain the student's permission to release information.

## **Acknowledgements**

This guide exemplifies #HearIAM campaign’s commitment to creating a safer, more socially connected place for our Molloy community to learn and thrive. It represents extensive collaboration between the Counseling Department, Public Safety, Student Affairs, Academic Affairs, and Human Resources.

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## **Appendix A**

### Additional Resources

On RVC Main Campus:

Public Safety: (516) 323-3500

Student Personal Counseling Center: (516) 323-3484

Student Affairs Office: (516) 323-3456

Office of Academic Affairs: (516) 323-3024

Additional Off-campus Resources:

Local Police: 9-1-1

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK [8255]

Long Island Crisis Center Hotline: (516) 679-1111

**APPENDIX B**  
Crisis Protocol Visual Representation

**IS SOMEONE IN IMMINENT DANGER?**

***Imminent Danger:*** Risk of death is high. They have a plan and access to a lethal means, are planning to make an attempt very soon, or are currently in the process of making an attempt.

**YES**

**UNCERTAIN**



**Call  
IMMEDIATELY:**

**On RVC Main  
Campus:  
Public Safety  
516-323-3500**

**All other Molloy  
University off-site  
locations:  
9-1-1**

**Call:**

**On RVC Main  
Campus:  
Public Safety  
516-323-3500**

**All other Molloy  
University off-site  
locations:  
9-1-1**

**REMEMBER:**

- Do NOT leave the student alone
- Get the student help IMMEDIATELY
- Confidentiality does not apply when someone's life is in danger

## IS SOMEONE IN IMMINENT DANGER?

**Imminent Danger: Risk of death is high. They have a plan and access to a lethal means, are planning to make an attempt very soon, or are currently in the process of making an attempt.**

**NO**  
↓

1. Request to see student in a private space that is safe for the student and you
  - Briefly acknowledge your observations (e.g. change in behavior)
  - Express your concern directly and honestly
  - Disclose that you cannot guarantee complete confidentiality
  - Listen carefully, and acknowledge the student's pain
  - If you observe any evidence of suicidal thinking, ask directly "Are you thinking of killing yourself?"
    - If student denies current suicidal thinking, refer student to available resources (see Appendix A)
      - Contact Student Personal Counseling Center (516) 323-3484 to report your informal referral and obtain further consultation, if needed
    - If student responds that he/she is currently experiencing suicidal thinking, but are NOT in imminent danger, do not leave the student alone AND contact Student Personal Counseling Center (516) 323-3484 for immediate consult
      - If counselor is not available, contact Public Safety (516) 323-3500 and they will connect you with a trained Administrator on-call
2. Follow-up with student on referral a few days to one week following initial contact